

TESTIMONY OF ERNEST CAMERON IN SUPPORT OF FUNDING FOR THE CONNECTICUT FAIR HOUSING CENTER

My name is Ernest Cameron. I want to thank you for funding the Connecticut Fair Housing Center over the past four years and I am asking you to keep that funding so that the Center can continue to help people like me.

I have been a lifelong resident of Hartford. I was born and raised in the city's North End. I have a Rental Assistance Program or RAP voucher which assists me in paying my rent. In August of 2006 I was living in a homeless shelter and trying to find a landlord that would accept my RAP voucher. I had always lived in the North End of Hartford but wanted to find an apartment outside of that area so that I could avoid the drugs and crime that happen so often there. I found several apartments I thought would meet my needs including one with laundry in the apartment but I was turned down over and over again. Landlords did not want to accept my RAP voucher. I was finally able to find a listing for an apartment in downtown Hartford that I could afford with my RAP voucher. Unfortunately, I was never given a fair chance to rent the apartment. I was discriminated against when the landlord told me he did not accept rental vouchers.

I had hoped that my RAP voucher would help me to leave the homeless shelter where I had been living and move into an apartment of my own. When I applied I was not given a fair chance to show that I was qualified. Finding an apartment that I could afford was difficult enough without being told that my one way of paying rent was unacceptable. I had spent a lot of time looking for an apartment that I could afford. But, when I called about the apartment the fact that I could afford the rent did not matter. The only thing that mattered was that I would pay the rent with the help of a RAP voucher. Because of this discrimination I had to spend an additional

two or three months living in a homeless shelter. Not only did this discrimination prolong my stay at the shelter, but it also put me in danger of not being able to get an apartment at all.

When I received the RAP voucher I saw it as an opportunity to improve my life. I saw it as a way to choose where I wanted to live and as a way to a stable life. It was very discouraging to suffer discrimination because of what I saw as a way to a better life. After being discriminated against I felt that I did not have an equal chance to find housing and that there were many obstacles standing in my way to finding a home.

I contacted the Connecticut Fair Housing Center about this incident and they have helped me bring a complaint against the landlord who discriminated against me. While I am no longer homeless, I brought the case, in part, to make sure that no one else has to suffer the way I did. Please continue funding for the Connecticut Fair Housing Center so that they can continue helping people like me.